



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



PURPLE UP FOR MILITARY KIDS



April marks the nation's "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor our state's military youth who have been impacted by deployments. In celebration, South Dakota's Operation: Military Kids (OMK) program is inviting everyone to join in and show their support by being part of the "Purple Up! For Military Kids" Day, to be held on Friday, April 13.

Everyone is being encouraged to wear **purple** on that date as a visible way to show support and thanks to all military children for their strength and sacrifices.

Purple is the color that symbolizes all branches of the military, as it is the combination of Army green, Coast Guard blue, Air Force blue, Marine red and Navy blue.

OMK hopes everyone will take this opportunity to appreciate and celebrate these young heroes. The goal of the event is for military youth to actually see a lot of "purple" that day to visually witness the support of their communities.

Mayors are being encouraged to declare April 13th as "Purple Up for Military Kids" Day encouraging everyone in the community to wear purple.

Businesses, organizations, and schools are encouraged to hang signs to encourage everyone to wear purple. Radio and television stations are asked to promote the "Purple Up" campaign along with saying "Thank You to all military kids for being strong when their parents are deployed."

Let's make South Dakota "PURPLE" in support of our military youth.

Inside this issue:

730th Will Not Deploy	2
Henderson Receives Patriotic Employer Award	2
VA Gulf War Task Force Report	3
Rudebusch Joins VSO Team	3
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center	4
Upcoming Events	5



GUARD UNIT WILL NOT DEPLOY TO AFGHANISTAN

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 730th Area Support Medical Company, of Vermillion, will not deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 730th's 48 assigned members received word this week from U.S. Central Command they would not be deploying in July to provide health care support to service members overseas.

The change in deployment status is a result of the gradual draw down of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

The mission of the 730th is to provide echelon I or basic emergency medical services. The unit is equipped with ambulances to quickly evacuate and provide care to patients en-route to a medical treatment facility. The unit is also able to provide echelon II care – of an emergent inpatient-outpatient nature – and return service members back to duty or evacuate them on to definitive care.

The unit is composed of combat medics, medical doctors, physician assistants, nurses, lab technicians, radiologists, dental technicians, mental health technicians, and maintenance and support staff.

JOHN HENDERSON RECEIVES PATRIOTIC EMPLOYER AWARD

John Henderson, Engineering Program Manager at the Hot Springs VA Medical Center, received the Patriotic Employer Award on March 20, 2012. The Patriotic Employer Award is from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and recognizes employers who support the National Guard and Reserve.

John was nominated by VA Black Hills' employee, Matt Erpenbach. Matt is a Captain in the Air Guard and was activated in June 2011 to assist with the severe flooding in Pierre, SD. In support of Matt's deployment, John took over Matt's construction project workload allowing him to focus on his important mission.

According to John, "Matt is a dedicated employee and soldier and I am proud to have him on my team. Our troops are nothing short of heroes overseas and at home. They will always have my support."



VA GULF WAR TASK FORCE REPORT RELEASED

The VA has released the second in a series of annual reports from its Gulf War Veterans Illnesses Task Force, outlining how the department will address the concerns of veterans deployed during the Gulf War of 1990-1991. The report is available on the Internet at http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/2011_GWVI-TF_Report.pdf.

This report, which considered input from nearly 500 veterans who responded to the draft report, provides a roadmap for the VA's continued enhancements in the care and services they provide to Gulf War Veterans.

The VA issued a draft version of this report for public comment on Oct. 21, 2011. During the 30-day comment period, the VA received over 450 comments through a special social media website created for this purpose, along with twenty-five other comments received through mail, e-mail and telephone calls.

The report focuses on efforts to improve the delivery of health care for Gulf War Veterans. One of the most substantial additions is the launch of a prototype clinical care model specifically for Gulf War Veterans, which is the most critical point of service the VA provides. There are also efforts underway to create better links between specialty knowledge on Gulf War health issues and subject matter experts for health care providers serving these veterans at the point of care.

Gulf War specific research and development is also contributing to clinical practice and clinical education throughout the VA.

The VA continues to leverage partnerships to improve longitudinal medical surveillance and epidemiology so the department is better able to address the potential health impacts on veterans from past environmental exposures as well as those on today's battlefield.

The VA recognizes that a great number of Gulf War Veterans use the Internet every day to share their ideas and concerns. In addition to public interaction via social media, the main VA Gulf War illnesses website was recently updated at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/index.asp. Veterans can subscribe there to receive future updates.



RUDEBUSCH JOINS VSO TEAM

Grant County has selected Larry Rudebusch as their county veterans service officer. Larry began his duties this week. His office hours are 8:00 am to noon on Mondays and 8:00 am—5:00 pm on Wednesdays and Fridays. Larry's email address is larry.rudebusch@state.sd.us.

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL EDUCATION CENTER

Commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial groundbreaking this week, officials of the memorial's fund announced the development of an education center to inform younger generations about the war's history.

Retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey, a Vietnam veteran and chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund advisory board, said the center also will showcase a "Wall of Faces" of the lives lost during the war, just as the wall bears their names. "The wall is not just for the [millions] of us who served, but also for the 300,000 or more who were wounded, the 58,000 who were killed, and all the pain that brought along with it [for] dads, mothers, brothers, friends," McCaffrey said. "It's an extraordinary achievement." And the crux of the education center, he said, will be to connect service members' stories, families and experiences to the wall.



"It will also connect the other veterans from our other wars from the Revolutionary War all the way up to the unbelievable heroism and sacrifice of our service members who are still fighting in Afghanistan," he said. "The Wall" is one of the most visited memorials in the nation's capital, added retired Army Brig. Gen. George Price, who also was an early supporter of the memorial and served in Vietnam. Price said the American public owes knowledge of the Vietnam War to today's children. "We owe this center to our youngsters to bridge the gap between then and now," he said. "We need to make sure they understand that mistakes were made, good things were achieved, and most importantly, they must understand the sacrifices of service to the most important country in the world, the United States of America."

To preserve the legacy of the fallen, the center will offer exhibits such as:

- "Telling Their Stories," to showcase military service taken from excerpts of letters and memories;
- "The Wall of Faces," digital images of the more than 58,000 service members who are memorialized on the wall;
- "The Legacy of Service," comprising images of service members who served in all the nation's wars through Iraq and Afghanistan; and
- "The Artifacts Collection," which is expected to exhibit more than 120,000 personal items left at the wall by families and visitors.

The center also will provide other educational resources for information on the fallen, officials said. The education center's groundbreaking is expected to take place sometime this year, amid other celebrations to take place all year along the National Mall to commemorate the memorial's 30 years, Memorial Fund officials said.



Upcoming Events

Apr. 2—Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial—VA Black Hills Cemetery
Apr. 3—Veteran/Retiree Summit—Lemmon American Legion—7:00 pm
Apr. 4—Veteran/Retiree Summit—Mobridge National Guard Armory—9:00 am
Apr. 4—Veteran/Retiree Summit—Cheyenne River Motel—Eagle Butte—7:00 pm
Apr. 5—Veteran/Retiree Summit—Spearfish Armory—7:00 pm
Apr. 13—Purple Up for Military Kids Day
Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade
Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City
May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings
May 11—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Brookings
May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings
May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre
May 19—Armed Forces Day
May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre
May 28—Memorial Day
Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings
Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre
Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn
Jun. 14—Flag Day
Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown
Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

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